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ABSTRACT

A model for teacher induction is presented. A carefully planned induction model requires the establishment of teams of colleagues from the public schools and the university. The role of the teams will not be to play out as a group the role currently played by the university supervisor or evaluator. Rather, the team will be selected on the basis of the individual and collective strengths required to facilitate the development professionally and personally of the prospective teacher. They will assist one another in the instruction components of the induction experience. They will work with the inductee in assessing learning strategies, classroom environment, the school as a culture, and take active responsibility for helping the inductee and the school system solve the problems and address the opportunities which emerge over time. The university members of the team will teach in school classrooms and the public school members of the team will teach on the university campus in a regular and planned fashion. Neither will be served-up as "guest lecturers." Public school people and their university colleagues will engage in their own professional growth and development as a consequence of their involvement with the induction approach. (JD)

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EXCELLENCE IN SECONDARY EDUCATION: THE INDUCTION OF TEACHERS

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"Excellence in Secondary Education: The Induction of Teachers"

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College of Education
Illinois State University

by

William S. Dunifon

Each of us has had something close to the experience which I am about to describe.

I remember going off to teach my first extension graduate classes at The University of Michigan. Though the students in my classes were, for the most part, employed full-time and coming to my class after a full day's work, they seemed to have certain qualities and characteristics which my senior level undergraduate students did not possess. The teachers and administrators enrolled in my graduate classes seemed to be more highly motivated to master (not just become acquainted with) the content of the course. Many of them, at their own initiative, read and pursued conceptual and theoretical issues far beyond that which was required for the course. At the same time, these students seemed to be able to ask more penetrating and helpful questions regarding the application of theory to professional practice than their senior counterparts. As an instructor, I had to be much more thoughtful in my response because my "authority" deriving from holding a Ph.D. held little sway if I could not speak to the realistic context in which my graduate students sought to apply their learnings.

There was a fascinating effort on my part of posit explanations for this clear and unarguable difference between my senior level

courses and those graduate level courses dominated by those who were practicing professionals. For example, I first thought the extraordinary motivation of the graduate students was primarily related to my ability to motivate or the ways in which the material I had chosen for the courses "turned on" the students. After allowing my ego the chance to spread its wings, reality caused me to discard this explanation as a way of understanding what was going on.

Then, I turned on to the adult educational literature having to do with life span development and thought that the advanced chronological and developmental maturity of the graduate students was the primary basis of the differences I observed. Then, I realized that several of the students in the graduate classes were separated by only a couple of years from their own senior year at the University. There could not be as much difference attributable to age and development as I observed. Though development differences clearly were at work, the differences did not lend themselves to the adult education explanation.

I continued to ponder the question which now had formed more fully in my mind: "Why were the working, full-time students in my graduate classes learning with greater efficiency and achieving higher levels of understanding than the exceptionally bright seniors?"

The conclusion I reached is one which you can anticipate. It is a conclusion which has been borne out by subsequent research on my part as well as the part of others. The students in those graduate classes performed at higher levels of learning because

they were operating out of the context of the real workplace. They were teachers and administrators who that very day had come from "live" situations in which they were NOT observers or student teachers who would be gone in nine weeks. They were living their professional lives in a setting where they had to be responsible and in which they would be held accountable. Consequently, they were highly motivated students interacting with the course material, one another, and the instructor in a fashion which led to strong educational outcomes.

My own hunch and subsequent research, some of which Dean Griffin will share later, was that age and life span development were fundamentally independent of the phenomenon I was observing and experiencing. If that were the case, then it began to occur to me (this is not a thought original to me, by the way) that placement of pre-service education professionals in a setting which approximates the setting in which the graduate students find themselves might facilitate stronger educational outcomes for the undergraduates.

There are clear limitations to this thought. I need to emphasize that I was teaching graduate <u>professional</u> courses in which there was a strong emphasis on the theoretical but an equally strong emphasis on professional application. There are myriad courses which are not professionally or practically oriented that may not be subject to the same dynamics I had identified in my courses. Another unique feature which needs to be emphasized is that the students in the graduate courses were almost universally

engaged in human services professions with a great preponderance in teaching or educational administration. Involvement in, for example, the practice of dentistry, would probably not provide the same sort of motivation or lead to the same sort of learning outcomes in my courses.

Given these and a number of other obvious limitations and caveats, I began to think about how we prepare teachers. At this and many other universities (including the one I was at during the period I just described), we attempt to approximate some of the circumstances which are like those experienced by my graduate students. We place prospective teachers in observational settings so they can "see" a live classroom for a substantial number of hours prior to the clinical experience of student teaching itself.

Following student teaching and the appropriate assessments which are attached to it, we recommend the prospective teacher for certification. At the point of the confluence of certification and graduation from our degree programs, the student is left to place him or herself and moves on to the first job placement. Here, with no active or intentional support services from the university, the new teacher begins his or her career. Unlike the old days when virtually every system and building had a flock of new teachers entering every fall, newly hired teachers today go out alone and are very likely to be the <u>only</u> new teacher at a given grade level or in a particular subject matter area. One consequence is that newly hired teachers do not have access to the peer support group and informal networks which used to grow naturally from the infusion of vast numbers of new teachers each

fall into a school or school system. There are few others who share the same concerns and anxieties. Few if any experience the same difficulties faced by the first year teacher because the vast majority of the teacher corps is well experienced these days.

These more contemporary circumstances have caused the need for examination of alternative methods of teacher preparation to be more thoughtfully examined.

An approach which I am convinced has value is the induction approach to teacher preparation. It can provide the sort of context analagous to the one I described earlier experienced by my former graduate students. Properly mounted and managed, it must provide for the professional and personal support and professional development of the teacher. Let me describe what I mean by an induction approach and indicate along the way why I think it is worth testing.

The induction period should be at least one year in duration though in my "best of all worlds" thinking it will be two years. Not only does this provide a longer time span for clinical learnings, but it requires the prospective teacher to see herself as fundamentally more responsible and accountable than would be the case if she were only in a classroom for nine weeks. Things that can be avoided and finessed in nine weeks will probably pop out in bold relief over a year or two.

Several content areas which we now attempt to teach prior to the time we certify a prospective teacher will be taught during the induction period thereby replicating the dynamics I and countless others have found as we have taught practicing professionals.

Their understanding of the concepts and theory will be informed by their experiences in the induction period just as their professional practice will be informed by their understanding of conceptual and theoretical matters. The student will find himself in the midst of what I believe is a most creative tension: the bipolar tension between theory and practice.

A carefully planned induction model requires the establishment of teams of colleagues (who are genuinely colleagues) from the public schools and the university. The role of the teams will not be to play out as a group the role currently played by the university supervisor or evaluator. Rather, the team will be selected on the basis of the individual and collective strengths required to facilitate the development professionally and personally of the prospective teacher. They will assist one another in the instructiion components of the induction experience. They will work with the inductee in assessing learning strategies, classroom environment, the school as a culture (and complex array of sub-cultures), and take active responsibility for helping the inductee and the school system solve the problems and address the opportunities which emerge over time.

The university members of the team will teach in school classrooms, and the public school members of the team will teach on the university campuses in a regular and planned fashion. Neither will be served-up as "guest lecturers." Public school people and university colleagues will engage in their own professional growth and development as a consequence of their involvement with the induction approach.

Because the induction model is more radically clinical than that which we now most often undertake, it will provide greater opportunity for summative and formative evaluation and assessment. The assessment and evaluation should be carried out more frequently and to a higher level of complexity than is now the case. The formative data will be a central component of the professional growth thrust of induction. The summative feedback will be designed to hold the prospective teacher as well as the induction team accountable for specified skills and knowledge outcomes.

This approach is clearly going to be more expensive in some ways than our current efforts. It is suggested, however, as an alternative to what we now do and <u>not</u> as a substitute. In addition, it seems to me there are countless creative and legitimate ways the schools and universities can share the costs in a fashion that is mutually beneficial.

The inductee should be paid a regular salary of about $12,000 a year (1984 dollars) for the duration of the induction period. Incentives will need to be provided the schools, school systems, and teachers initially. I believe the need for financial incentives will diminish as people experience some of the positive outcomes of this approach. The State should guarantee the funding required for the salaries for inductees as well as the supplements required for school personnel. This guarantee should extend at least for a ten-year period to insure the proper testing and evaluation of the induction approach.

Let me close by saying that my determination to experiment with an induction model is not based on a negative assessment of

what we now do in the preparation of teachers but rather on a sense of excitement about what might be accomplished in a different fashion. The time is ripe to test and experiment and consider new possibilities. Induction approaches to teacher preparation represent one sphere in which both excitement and possibilities are high!